Name of Scholar: Rima Ghosh

Supervisor: Professor Gautam Ghosal

Title: The Evolution of Sri Aurobindo's Political Philosophy: An Integral Approach

Registration No: VB-1864 of 2015-16

Date of Registration: 01.09.2015

Synopsis

Sri Aurobindo disclaimed the title philosopher and asserted: "I am primarily a poet anda politician" (Roy 100). He was surely trying to draw our attention to something morespecific about him, to something which is more important than philosophy. He did shape out a philosophy through his experiential knowledge, but he was not enjoying the title"philosopher" tagged to his name. More intriguing is his claim to be called a politician,simply because the common knowledge about him is that his political life ended on July 4,1910, when he reached Pondicherry leaving behind his eventful days in Calcutta. How didhis political life survive through the last forty years of his life, when he was repeatedlydiscouraging biographers to write about his life because it was "not on the surface for man to see"?

As a matter of fact, he was deeply into politics from the moment his anglicized father changed with the times and turned a patriot. From 1885 onwards, he began sendingclippings of newspapers to his sons showing the agony of Indian people under the Britishrule. Young Aurobindo was an unhappy person, an alienated student, not interested insports and religion, brooding over the lack of affection from his insane mother. He waspolitically ready to join the nationalist movement even in the last two years of his stay inEngland. That might be the reason behind his loitering in the streets of London on the day of the I.C.S. riding examination. Immediately on his return to India in 1893, he began tore-Indianise himself (Iyengar). In 1894, he wrote for *Induprakash* nine political articles lashing out at the Congress for its lack of touch with the Proletariat and the subalterns. His underground revolutionary work from Baroda ended in April, 1906, when he took charge as the editor of Bepin Chandra Pal's *Bandemataram*. The editorials and the articles were fiery in the first two years, till the end of 1907, where he showed his traditional sense of the Greco-Roman satire in his hard hitters at the loyalists and the moderates, especially at Babu Surendranath Banerjee and N.N. Ghose. Branded an extremist, along with Bepin Paland Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose claimed the title of New Nationalism for their aggressive stance, a nationalism which was the joint produce of Bankim and Sri Ramakrishna. His letters to his wife Mrinalini show us the first glint and glimpse of the Mother-worshipper(The country as not a piece of land but a living image of the Divine Mother).

The Doctrine of Passive Resistance (1907), a series of essays published in*Bandemataram*, introduced the theory of the "colonization of the psyche", which Fanonused much later in 1961 in The Wretched of the Earth (Patricia Waugh: 344-345). FromMay 1908 to May 1909, Ghose was kept in a small cell, in connection with the AliporeBomb Case, where he had the first feeling of Cosmic consciousness and then a Knowledgeby Identity. That was a turning point in his

political and spiritual life. Sisirkumar Ghosetells us: “Here was an extreme temperament”. Coming out of jail he became quiet, hissatire gone in a wave of silence. He started a journal called *Karmayogin*, which continuedthe agenda of New Nationalism as the voice of God, but the fire was gone.

From 1911, he started signing Sri Aurobindo instead of Aurobindo Ghose and between1914 and 1921; he serialized his major prose works in the monthly journal called *The Arya*. *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *War and Self-Determination* wereserialized in the Journal (1915-1920). While Rabindranath became silent after the strongreaction to his discourse on Nationalism (Kripalini) after 1917, Sri Aurobindo asserted inthese later socio-political works that Nationalism will stay back for a long time tillhumanity is prepared for a new consciousness. Rabindranath must have read SriAurobindo’s views on the evolutionary steps to Internationalism and it is curious that hebecame desperate to meet the recluse after 1920 and he finally met him in 1928 despite hisbad health. Rabindranath’s turning to Subhas Chandra Bose in 1940 and his acceptance ofSubhash as the Deshnayak indicate the poet’s response to the old brand of nationalism: thecountry as Mother, who is chained and has to be freed from the clutches of the colonialrule. Sri Aurobindo stuck to this politics of New Nationalism till his passing in 1950. “TheTiger and the Deer” written in 1942, shows his symbolic dismissal of the colonial powers.It is symbolic of the three types of colonization: territorial, psychological andgeographical. His poetry till last bears the stamp of his early brand of Nationalism.

In fact, his politics is part of his theory of integral life and living, part and parcel of hispsychology of consciousness and the concept of evolving humanity. Poetry, Psychologyand Politics are rolled into one. There is no contradiction, as he claims in his celebratedapophthegm, “All life is yoga.” Speaking of global unity through an evolution ofconsciousness, Sri Aurobindo maintained throughout his life the need of a revival of theancient Indian glory for the benefit of the world, of all nations. Even as a lover ofhumanity he stuck to the concept of India as the guru of the world. His final poetry *Savitri*,completed through dictations to Dr. Nirodbaran Batabyal, is replete with strongnationalistic messages within the dense texture of an advocacy for integral life, materialand spiritual.

The theoretical framework of my thesis will be Sri Aurobindo’s own concept of integrallife, which takes within itself a large body of politics, mundane and occult, global andnational. In an apparently strange spiritual move, Sri Aurobindo became a friend of theaxis power as he believed and claimed to have seen Hitler trying to destroy the world.Subhash Bose unknowingly stood for this destructive force, while Sri Aurobindo changedhis political stance to follow the play of forces. Sri Aurobindo claimed, infra-rational itdefinitely is, the hostile force in Hitler had thrown him downstairs one night in 1938. Itwas during that period of convalescence; Sri Aurobindo would sit in the evenings for talkswith ten or twelve people around him. These talks were recorded by A.B. Purani and DR.Nirobaran Batabyal who was also his personal physician. I wish to explore these talksrelating to national and world politics, which throw light on his inlook into, andforeknowledge of, Hitler’s moves. A disappointed yogi remarked in the talks: “Bose is nota diplomat; Fazlool Haque is a greater diplomat” (Nirodbaran 167). He did not approve ofBose’s quarrels with Jyotin Sengupta in 1938, as he himself had been in perfect harmonywith Tilak, Bepin Pal and Lajpat Ray.

Politics, like poetry, was a lifelong activity for Sri Aurobindo, the politics whichintegrates the other reflections of life spontaneously: the psychology of Consciousness, thetransformation of the lower into the higher, which is there in his plays too, the cosmic andmaterial themes in the two epics, *Ilion* and *Savitri*, his translation tactics, adaptations, andall his cultural gestures against the western construct of India. Sachidananda Mohantyrightly says, "In him, binaries and conflicts are harmonized: the West and the East,English and the Indian languages, city and the region, merit and social justice, religion andsecularism, pacifism and militancy, conservation and development, nationalism andinternationalism, et al." (Preface). The purpose of my thesis is to explore the evolution ofSri Aurobindo's philosophy from 1885 to 1950.

Here is a tentative chapter survey:
Ch-1 – Sri Aurobindo in England
Ch-2- The Concept of New Nationalism and Bhavani Mandir
Ch-3: The Turning Point (1908-1909) and *Karmayogin*
Ch-4: The Glorious Individual and its Relation to Society and the World
Ch-5: The Ideal of Human Unity
Ch-6: Poetry and Politics: the Mature Years
Conclusion.

Bibliography:

Primary

Purani, A.B.. Evening Talks, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1959. Print.

Sri Aurobindo. SABCL, Vol. 1 Bande Mataram. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust,

1972.

---. SABCL. Vol. 2 Karmayogin. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972. Print.

---. SABCL. Vol. 15 Social and Political Thought. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

1971. Print.

Secondary

Chattopadhyaya, D. P. Sri Aurobindo and Karl Marx: Integral Sociology and Dialectical Sociology. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988. Print.

Das, Manoj. Sri Aurobindo. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1972. Print.

Ghose, Sisirkumar. The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Kolkata: Chatuskone, 1969. Print.

Heehs, Peter. Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and A History. 5th ed. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 2006. Print.

Mitra, Sisirkumar. Resurgent India. Bombay: Allied, 1963. Print.

Mukherjee, Haridas, and Uma Mukherjee. Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought, 1893- 1908. Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958. Print.

Nirodbaran. Talks with Sri Aurobindo. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1973. Print.

Pandey, Sheojee. Sri Aurobindo and Vedānta Philosophy. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1987. Print.

Purani, Ambalal Balkrishna. The Life of Sri Aurobindo: A Source Book. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1964. Print.

---. Evening Talks, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1959. Print.

Ranchan, Som P., and K. D. Gupta. Sri Aurobindo as a Political Thinker: An Interdisciplinary Study. New Delhi: Konark, 1988. Print.

Roy, Dilip Kumar. Sri Aurobindo Came to Me. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952. Print.

Satprem. Sri Aurobindo: Or, The Adventure of Consciousness. Trans. Tehmi. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. Print.

Sethna, Kaikhushru Dhunjibhoy. The Indian Spirit and the World's Future. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953. Print.

Singh, Karan. Prophet of Indian Nationalism: A Study of the Political Thoughts of Sri

Aurobindo Ghosh, 1893-1910. London: Allen & Unwin, 1963. Print.

Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo, a Contemporary Reader. Ed. Sachidananda Mohanty. London: Routledge, 2008. Print.

---. SABCL, Vol. 1 Bande Mataram. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972.

---. SABCL. Vol. 2 Karmayogin. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972. Print.

---. SABCL. Vol. 15 Social and Political Thought. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram. 1971. Print.

---. Sri Aurobindo on Himself. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972. Print.

Varma, Vishwanath Prasad. The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976. Print.

Waugh, Patricia. Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide. New Delhi: OUP, 2006. Print.